

# Modernity/Post-modernity and Post-colonialism : On the Tasks and Methodology of Historical Research

著者	YUN Kon ch'a
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## **Modernity/Post-modernity and Post-colonialism: On the Tasks and Methodology of Historical Research**

YUN Kōn-ch'a (YOON Keun-cha)

The presentation titles today cover the extremely important subjects of "Korea under Japanese rule," and "Past and Current Research Results and Issues for Future Research." One might consider that the focus of this symposium is primarily historical science research. I am very happy to have this opportunity to speak here at Nichibunken, an outstanding facility. Now, although I have studied history a bit, in truth, I am not exactly sure what it is I have studied. As such, I am not sure if I will be able to present a talk that lives up to this subject, but I would like to proceed with my talk based on what I have prepared. During this next hour, I would like to discuss my basic thoughts on this matter.

Korea could be considered a country that is truly undergoing rapid change, and I consider it more as a region. I was actually able to spend part of the last year in Seoul through a foreign research program. I was not actually in Seoul for the entire year. For the first five months I was in London, studying at libraries and attending several study meetings. Starting in September, I spent the first semester of the school year at the Institute of International Area Studies, Seoul National University. As a member of that department, I held classes in the graduate school and did several other things for seven months. I thought that Korea had changed quite a bit. Unlike the past, I felt that we could speak and act freely, with almost no restrictions. Korea is even more active than Japan, with all types of discussion meetings and gatherings. My seven months there were extremely busy ones.

I published a book entitled *Gendai Kankoku no shisō* [Thoughts on Modern Korea] two years ago, in September 2000. I wrote the book after reading some other books and essays that were somewhat exaggerated. In other words, I wrote the book without really knowing much about the actual situation. In a sense, I guess it was quite a feat from the aspect of

writing the book without knowing the actual conditions of the subject, or the people covered in the book. I think if I were now told to write the same text and the same book, I probably could not do it. Now that I have stayed in Seoul for seven months and have gotten to know various people, I imagine that I would see the faces of the different people I have met and be concerned about the criticisms they may have of what I would say in the book, so I think that I would probably not be able to write the book at this time.

My seven-month stay in Seoul lasted until the end of March of this year. While in Seoul, I attended gatherings almost every day. Well actually, two or three times a week. I would attend symposiums, make presentations, participate in discussions, read various types of manuscripts, make regular contributions to newspapers, and give talks at places like culture centers. Of course, I also gave classes at the graduate school of the Seoul National University. In a sense, it was through my various activities that I was able to get a feeling of passing through the locations of my book on the concepts on modern Korea. Through this process, I was able to verify the things I had written in my book, to realize what parts were insufficient, and to discover things that I had evaluated incorrectly. Thus, with the book I have written, the things I have actually experienced being in Korea, and the things I have been able to verify, I feel that I have come to have a comparatively good understanding of Korean society and the conditions of Korean concepts. However, in an academic sense, I am not confident that I could put my findings into some organized format or even present a proper talk here today; I feel that these things are actually a bit difficult. In any event, I would like to present my talk today on "Modernism/Post-modernism and Post-colonialism," and hope that my talk will in some way prove useful to the theme of this symposium.

As you know, the term "post-modern" has become very popular in Korea. The term is often used in Japan, and it is also often used in Korea. In Korea, however, post-modern and post-modern theory are often expressed using the Chinese characters "脱近代" and "脱近代論," respectively. Actually, the characters are written in Han'gŭl and pronounced in the Korean way, but in terms of meaning, the meaning is close to what is expressed by the Chinese characters when used in the

Japanese language. Likewise, in Japan the foreign term “cultural studies” is used, but in Korea, a term corresponding to “munhwa yŏn’gu” (cultural studies) is used. In Japan, the foreign terms “post-colonial” and “post-colonialism” are used, and these are also used in Korea as well, but it is more common to use a term equating to “decolonization.” In addition to the differences in the way that terms are pronounced using English terms in katakana, Han’gŭl, or Chinese character expressions, I think there is also a difference in the underlying meanings of the terms. I will discuss this later, but since today we must discuss historical studies, I would like to proceed with that subject.

French philosopher Fernand Braudel stated that of the various academic fields, politics, economics, etc., it is historical science that is the most important. In other words, historical science must be placed at the pinnacle of all human sciences and must be a comprehensive field in which interest is expanded to all aspects of society so that historical science can become the focus of social science. This is my opinion as well. We must think about many things as we go about the course of our lives, but for the intelligentsia, those who perform work based on knowledge, it is history, or in the scope of daily thought, an awareness of history, that becomes the most important way of thinking, or the origin for our activities. Strictly speaking, it is not possible to consider matters, or to take action, without an awareness of history. Also, one actual problem we face is that human behavior will change completely depending on what type of awareness a person has about history, so a very important issue is the way in which each person organizes an awareness of history within his or her own mind.

I am a second-generation Korean Japanese, but it is not that I chose to be born a Korean, or to be born in Japan. I was raised in a poor household, and sometimes wished that I had been born into a rich family, but there was nothing I could do about it. When I would start to wish that I were rich, I knew that there was already nothing I could do about it. In the same way, when I begin to doubt one of my ideas or feel that it needs more thought, my awareness of history has a fairly strong impact up to that point. Right now, I feel as if I am speaking Japanese very well, and someone coming from Korea might praise my language ability, but basically, nobody offers



such praise. It is only natural that I speak Japanese. Conversely, I only speak Japanese. I am able to speak a little Korean as a result of hard study, but basically, my native language is Japanese. Thus, it is not that I have studied Japanese because I wanted to learn the language, I have been taught Japanese since I was born. It is the only language I know.

In that sense, an awareness of history is already affecting me before I begin to think about something. I do not know at what age people begin to think about history, but I imagine some people begin as early as high school, while others may begin seriously considering history in university, or after graduation, or when they become a researcher. However, when one begins to think about history, that person may have already been instilled with a fundamental knowledge of history. Furthermore, as can be seen in controversies over textbook adoption, the knowledge people receive of history has been passed through a filter. This knowledge of history is instilled by public education or national education, that is, by systemized education regulated by nation power, so the education takes on one format, which in extreme cases, and is taught as authentic history or national history. Thus, in many aspects, historical facts may be distorted or purposely fabricated. In that sense, when one becomes able to think about history, it is extremely important to have the ability to think for oneself, to reconstruct what has already been learned, and to reconfigure one's interpretation of history and awareness of history. I think that this is a fundamental proposition for all people, the intelligentsia in particular.

Actually, this history, this awareness of history, or the framework of historical research that becomes our basis for our awareness of history, has changed greatly since the 1980s. This is true for Japan as well, but is particularly true for Korea. Great changes took place between the 1970s and 1980s, as well as between the 1980s and 1990s. We also saw great changes as we entered the 21st century, bringing us to the reality in which we are currently living.

The "research of colonies" is extremely important. It remains quite evident today that there is definitive significance in studying the effects of colonialism that remain today, and looking at the reasons why regions came under Japanese colonial rule, the conditions of colonialism, and the after effects resulting from colonialism. These factors are linked to what

defines how each individual today lives. Taking an even broader view brings us to the major issue of how we recognize the “modern” era, the time in human history that we are now living.

While this applies to Koreans living in Japan as well, looking at the scope of Korea as a country, its history is of course a collection of contradictions of the world. When studying Koreans living in Japan, one must thoroughly pursue various aspects such as politics, economics, and history. The scope of such study is both broad and deep, so it is not uncommon for new graduate students who have chosen to study Koreans living in Japan to change their research theme by the time they begin working on their doctorate. I think that this is because a study of Koreans living in Japan is such a broad and deep subject that researchers lose their way and do not know how to proceed. So, they decide to discontinue their research. It can be difficult for a researcher to limit study to just Koreans living in Japan, or the country of Korea, or North and South Korea, or to colonial periods, or periods following the abolishment of colonialism. Research themes tend to expand to encompass East Asia, or become even broader, touching on Pacific history or the world as a whole, including the Pacific area, and even to take a new look at “modernism” today.

In Korea, this way of thinking, this way of viewing history, and this way of studying, made a strong appearance in the 1980s. As you all know, there were battles in Korea for democratization. There was the student revolution of April 19 (the 4.19 Revolution), 1960, followed by battles for democracy, and a coup d'état by Pak Chŏng-hŭi in order to hinder the fight for democracy. There was a system of reforms, an extreme expression of the military dictatorship rule, and the battles starting in the 1970s that strove for democratization in revolt against the dictatorship. The battles for democratization grew even stronger in the 1980s. It was at this point that concepts of Marxism were introduced, and major transformations were realized in the historical study of post-liberation Korea as well as in academic research as a whole. In particular, as I mentioned earlier, there would be no problem in saying that major changes took place in historical research, a fundamental academic discipline. Now, although I am not a specialist on the matter, in the area of historical research, there were of course various results achieved in socio-economic historical research prior to that, or from the middle to the end of the Japan's Imperial period in

Korea, the colonialist view of history—a stagnant view of history, heteronomy view of history, and study focusing on old documents—held a prominent position in the country under colonialism. Within this, however, Korean scholars had raised points of issue regarding the germination of capitalism within socioeconomic-historical methodologies. This theory of capitalistic germination is said to have been linked to subsequent theories such as that of internal development. Fortunately, Dr. Chŏng Chae-jŏng will be discussing this matter later, so it may be better for me, as someone who is not an expert on the subject, to simply say nothing more on the matter.

In any event, the history of Korea as a nation, the history of North and South Korea as a region, may be an example of a history that encompasses the most contradictions of world history and human history. Accordingly, this is a situation that becomes more interesting the more we delve into it. While the use of the term “interesting” may be somewhat misleading, this is an extremely important theme in academic research. From the Third World come concepts ranging from postcolonial concepts and Orientalism concepts to methodologies for academic research, and through this we may be able to obtain a clear awareness of the contradictions of the world and humankind. It is certainly no accident that outstanding social scientists come from Third-World countries. Outstanding social scientists of today, such as Said and Spivak exhibit ways of thinking and academic research that are broader, deeper, and which hold true for a much broader range of people, than the concepts and research of their predecessors. Of course, it would not be strange for such an outstanding person to come from Korea, and I believe that Korea may hold such a position in history.

The starting point for this may have been the 1980s, as I mentioned previously. Many results were achieved in the 1980s, primarily in historical research, and since that time, although we could not go so far as to say that various types of academic research blossomed among the severe fighting for democratization, historical research may have still held a very large position and a strong significance. As you know, Marxism was crushed at one point in Korea amidst the anti-communism that followed the liberation of the country, but it had also been making a strong resurgence since the latter half of the 1980s. However, this resurgence was getting its start in an

era of change; in the 1990s, socialist countries were collapsing and the Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union came to an end. The Marxist resurgence was extremely short and extremely concentrated, and Marxism was again crushed. Well, it was not completely crushed, but interests shifted to other things. Korea was experiencing many diverse things all at once, things that Europe had experienced over periods of two-, three-, or four hundred years, and Korea may still be caught up in the turmoil of it all. I like to call this “compressed modernism.”

When Korea again became receptive to Marxism in the 1980s, it was introduced in the form of a dependency theory that had been given strong power by popularity primarily in Latin America. However, if we examine this a little more closely, we come to feel that the situation may have actually been different, and this leads us into a study of orthodox Marxism. This was an era in which Marxism managed to dodge the repression of government authority, to transcend the “Declaration for Democracy” in 1987, and the convergence that occurred at a certain level as a result of the publishing of *The Capital* in 1989. All this actually took place in a period of less than ten years.

Recently, a translation of a book about Rosa Luxemburg has been released in Korea. When I mentioned this to a certain Japanese person, I was told that it was a book that would be read with a postmodern interpretation of Rosa Luxemburg. It may be possible that the researcher intentionally translated the book in that way. While this is not the first time the subject of Rosa has been introduced in Korea, it is rare to find a book focusing on the subject. At the very least, when this book was introduced to and utilized by people such as researchers in a relatively visible way, it was introduced using the current trend of a postmodern format. By my estimates, after a little more time has passed, the fundamental assertions of Rosa, that is, things such as imperialism and ethnic problems, may come to be accepted again. With that, the introduction, reception, reaction, and ways of thinking about Korean concepts will begin to accept the cutting edge of the world, and furthermore, to regress. It may be best to express this as development in a condensed format.

When I think about the modern age of Korea, I feel that there are two main characteristics of the age. Korea took its own steps towards

modernization by opening its ports, but then it eventually came under colonial rule by Japan. After that, there was debate about whether or not to liberate the country, the North and South were divided, and a war broke out between the North and South, bringing us to the current condition of a divided nation. Simply put, the modern history of Korea is defined by the colonial rule by Japan and by the North-South division after liberation. Of course other factors were at work, such as movements for civilization and enlightenment by enlightening factions, and there is too much here to go into detail, but generally, I feel that these two main characteristics can be seen in the modern history of Korea. The two things that define the modern age of Korea are colonial rule by Japan and the North-South division. Furthermore, in regard to the North-South division occurring after liberation, as Korea also takes on the characteristic of being a dependent of the United States, the format of rule in modern Korea may have characteristics of being both colonial rule and semi-colonial rule. That is, the study of modern Korea must indeed be based on this fact. In other words, the country was under colonial rule, and then, under the system of division that came later, the country was in a condition of semi-colonial rule, and the distinction of these two conditions is certainly a prerequisite for the study of modern Korea. Although it may be a bit of an exaggeration, I would venture so far as to say that there is really no meaning to historical research, or any type of research for that matter, that deals with this subject vaguely. Most of the developing countries of the world have experienced periods of colonialism and semi-colonialism. In that sense, the modern history of North and South Korea, and Korea as a whole, possesses a very clear and intense form of these characteristics that are linked to the history of the world.

Now, let us consider how we can look at the modern history of Japan. While many things can be considered, I tend to think that the imperialistic country of Japan was created under the threat of invasion by the forces of Europe and the United States, being led, for example, by concepts such as the ideals of Yoshida Shōin. After Japan was defeated on August 15, 1945, there was much discussion on what to do about the emperor, and it was eventually decided that the imperial system would be continued, with the emperor as a symbol of the unity of the people. In both the Constitution of

the Empire of Japan and Japan's current constitution, the very first article places the emperor in an important position. The constitution defines that the government machinery of Japan and the emperor/imperial system are inseparable. Thus, we can understand this to mean that the modern history of Japan is an age in which the imperial system has lasted throughout. The term "imperial system" actually encompasses various meanings. As such, it would in a sense be risky to attempt to consolidate modern Japan under the single term of "imperial system," but while recognizing this risk, I feel that it is suitable to state that the age of modern Japan has been an age of the imperial system, and that is indeed the terminology I prefer to use. Now from that standpoint, when we look beyond the modern era to the postmodern era, in Korea, it becomes a matter of going beyond colonial rule and the North-South division, which equates to semi-colonialism. In Japan, the postmodern era becomes a matter of going beyond imperialism, in particular, the imperial system that is the key to imperialism.

If we think in this way, then when we are conducting research on the age of Korean colonialism, or research on Korean history that goes a bit further to include up to the present day, we must of course study what colonial rule actually was in the country, and what the North-South division and semi-colonial rule were. As a way of overcoming this, we must consider the assets bequeathed by colonialism, or in a negative sense, the liquidation of such assets, and to consider how the country can break away from the condition of North-South separation and semi-colonialism resulting from the hegemonism of the United States to achieve post-separation and unification. I think that if we do not consider these aspects, the true significance of academic research will not be realized. Although I may be exaggerating a bit here, I would like you to understand that the most important problem may lie in the lack of significance in research. In Japan, the subject of breaking away or overcoming imperialism and the imperial system is a fundamental proposition of academic research, and I think that it indeed must be so.

However, this is not necessarily the actual case. On that point, I feel that for Japan and Korea, particularly Korea, efforts are not being made to tackle historical issues head-on from the standpoint of the importance and complexity of the issues actually facing the countries. In Japan, when it comes to the study of the Emperor and the imperial system, there is a



tendency to avoid these matters, and perhaps it is just getting rid of imperialism that is discussed, and not the matter of getting rid of the imperial system. Of course, in the case of Korea as well, it is extremely difficult to answer the question of, for example, whether or not there are close studies being made of the imperial system of Japan, a country that is closely linked to the colonial rule of Korea. I think it could be said that studies to that degree have not really been conducted. Actually, I think that thus far there has been almost no study done on how the imperial system has fit into the formation of the minds and psyche of the Korean people. While I do not know about all cases, from looking at preceding studies, it could be possible to say that there have been few, or almost no, results from studies in this area. When it comes right down to it, while there may be a small amount of pro-Japanese literature study being done, I get the feeling that this fundamental and essential area, an area related to the foundation of ethics and psyche, has been neglected thus far. Actually, in Korea, the subject of pro-Japanese factions is often discussed, but I think this may be from a very political or nationalistic point of view which regards being pro-Japanese as a betrayal of the people of Korea.

Because this problem must not proliferate, I would like to talk about "Modernism/post-modernism and post-colonialism." First, while I imagine Dr. Chŏng Chae-jŏng will be discussing this later, I think that the problem of the modernization of colonies may indeed be a major problem. It is a problem of exploitation or development. In the case of Japan, I think this is related to the issue of a "total-war regime" for which discussions began a few years ago. I think this is emphasizing continuity. I feel that this type of research is necessary, or from the aspects of modern characteristics and the issues we face, as mentioned earlier, I also think that there is something missing, that this matter is not quite on solid ground.

Now, from the standpoint of conforming with research in Korea, it is not enough to only consider this problem in concrete terms of how the modern history of Korea, colonial history in particular, or the history from the end of colonialism to today, relates to Japan or the United States. Our thinking must also encompass problem awareness and points of issue of the modern age as proposed by, in a sense, post-modern theses, and our thinking must also be based on human history. In that sense, I think there is

extremely great significance in carrying forward the problem awareness made clear since the 1990s by the Marxism prior to that, or more specifically, by the disputes on social composition, and at the same time, there is also great significance in how the post-colonial research and post-modern research, which severed this Marxism, are combined and considered in parallel. As for whether or not this is going well, I think that it is actually not going well. As such, I also think a major issue is to figure out what efforts can be made in the future to make this go well.

I would also like to consider this problem in my own way. Recently, the autumn issue of *Munhwa Kwahak* [Cultural Science], magazine released in Korea printed an article I had written entitled "Modern Projects and Post-Modernism, as well as Post-Colonialism." The article was a bit long, but I hope to have it included in a collection of papers in Japan in the near future.

I would now like to discuss a bit about "modern" and "post-modern." As I said earlier, I feel the shades of nuance of these terms when written in Chinese characters do not quite match the English terms. Here, when I refer to these terms, I will refer to them in the sense inferred by the Chinese characters. In Korea, the terms are "*kūndae*" and "*t'algūndae*," respectively. I would like to summarize this a bit.

First, in regard to the disputes on the social structure of the 1980s, the disputes have often been criticized as having unclear purpose and being abstract, intellectual, or focusing too strongly on original context. I also presented this as an important issue with respect to the problems we are facing. Giving serious consideration to the question of what the fundamental contradictions in Korean society are in relation to the development of capitalism and to American imperialism, I was able to come up with the important energy of struggles for democratization, that is, "movements by the people for democratization." Korea at last made a "Declaration for Democracy" in 1987, achieving some level of democratization for the country, and the country then set out on its path of high-level economic development under a consistent, stable condition. However, in almost simultaneous development, the capitalistic countries of Eastern Europe were collapsing, Germany was unifying, and the Soviet Union was in a state of demise. Within this turbulent time, many of the



Marxists who had been leading the fight for democracy became disheartened and began to search for a new path. More than a few such people suddenly began to turn their interests to the French contemporary ideologies of Foucault, Derrida, Guattari, Deleuze and others.

Thus, in the ideological characteristics in Korea of the 1990s, post-modernism and other types of post-isms, cultural theory, and the like experienced an explosive surge in popularity. Debates within the "fourth society," etc., that had focused to that point on Marxism were now turning to a focus on French contemporary ideologies such as Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze. The printed word was also changing from difficult concepts such as capitalism, nation, ethnic groups, and class structures to things that were closer to daily life, flesh and blood matters, desire, culture, knowledge, authority, and other post-modernistic ideas. In a sense, a social environment was created in which terms such as capitalism, nation, ethnic groups, and class structures were received with adverse sentiment.

The so-called French contemporary ideologies had burst into Korea, and at the core of this type of thought may have been the idea of taking modern things very much to heart, or perhaps creating issues out of things that could not be seen from a modern standpoint. To put this differently, this was an inevitable product of the modern age, and furthermore, something that cannot be resolved in the modern age. Various things could be given as examples, such as minority problems, women's problems, gender problems, natural environment problems, or human rights problems. In Korea as well, we are starting to see the use of the terms "macro-history" and "micro-history." "Macro" of course means "big" and "micro" means small. For Japan, the use of these terms can be compared to, perhaps, the terms "big tale" and "small tale." Macro-history includes the methods for establishing discussions about class conflicts, for which discussions have focused on Marxism, as well as nations and ethnic groups. Micro-history includes matters such as minorities, women, gender, and ecology. Actually, this type of dichotomous expression itself is a problem, and on the postmodern side, the binomial opposing views and dichotomous concepts are themselves being severely criticized.

In Korea, when it comes to French contemporary ideology and postmodernism, perhaps one of the most favored figures is Deleuze, and

through these ideas, great interest has developed in problems such as the modern age, modernity, modern colonialism, and colonialism, and this interest is in a format that goes beyond Marxism. Furthermore, as time goes on, this flow of postmodernism will extend into the humanities and social sciences as a whole, and it could be said that in recent years, this has had a great influence on the field of historical research as well. Looking at this more carefully, it may be possible to consider these as disputes concerning modernism and post-modernism, or as discussed earlier, primarily in the form of a criticism of nationalism in various areas such as feminism. However, at the bottom of this we can consider that there are fundamental problems, such as how we should understand the concept of micro-history instead of macro-history, and whether or not we must deny traditional dichotomies such as imperialism versus nationalism, internal versus external, reason versus emotion, self versus other, and male versus female, as the foundation of argument.

Actually, this matter was recently covered in a feature issue of *Yōksa Pip'yōng* [Historical Critiques], and we are beginning to see the new publication of similar types of magazines. Also, for example, there are several books on the subjects of post-modernism and historical science, and there is no doubt that the matters of “post-nation” and “post-nationalism” have already become issues of historical research within the historical science world of Korea, as well as major issues related to methodology. A typical example of this is the criticism with respect to the methods of discussing conventional nationalism. I feel that even if this type of discussion is able to shatter the fixed concepts held thus far, and is beneficial in bringing about diverse ways of thinking, I would still question whether it will help us adequately ascertain the historical and social structures of North and South Korea, and whether it will lead us on the path to the future of post-separation and North-South unification, as discussed earlier.

As I mentioned micro-history before, this is affected by post-modern and cultural studies, and micro-history attempts to perform studies with a focus on small problems, although actually, these are definitely not small problems. As it were, micro-history is, more than anything, a Marxist concept centered on a class-conflict view of history. In Japanese, we could

consider this to be “*Ōki na monogatari ni hanki o hirugaesu*,” or “rebelling against the big tale.” In Korea, the term “Korean nationalist view of history” is often used, and micro-history could be considered as opposition to this view. Looking at the flow of historical research, I believe we can roughly divide this into the following periods—the 1960s following the 4.19 Revolution, the 1970s in which the Korean nationalist view of history began to appear, the 1980s and a view of history of the common people as well as the appearance of colonial modernism at the end of the 1980s, and the 1990s, in which micro-history affected by post-modernism began to appear.

Even so, in Korea, the historical ways of thinking and the ways of thinking about historical research are very firmly rooted in the country. This may be a Korean nationalist view of history, or the conventional tradition of the country. Of course, this also comes from the fact that Korea was subjected to the colonial rule of Japan, and today a unified nation-state has not been created. As for a Japanese nationalist view of history, shortly after defeat in World War II, the ideas of Japanese nation and national people were given emphasis in historical research and social movements in respect to becoming independent from the United States. This was an approach from the left wing and progressive powers, but in Japan today, the idea of the Japanese nation is only a concept of the right wing, such as an historical view of liberalism and organizations for creating new history textbooks. Although in Korea and Japan, efforts are being made in relation to ethnic groups, in Korea, this concept encompasses the sound meaning of striving to achieve unification, while in Japan, this is a risky concept that is linked to the prewar imperialistic view of history.

The micro-history of Korea has begun to show influence, but this still does not mean that macro-history is unnecessary. Such historical researchers who debated the directions of post-nation and post-nationalism may not be all advocates of post-colonialism and post-modernism. Of course, it could be said that post-modern concepts centering on French contemporary ideologies have a great effect on those who place importance on micro-history. However, if we read carefully, we see that these people are also emphasizing that it is not correct to consider post-modernism as not possessing promise and strategies with respect to ethnic group problems and class problems, but rather, only that there are different

viewing angles and methods of approach for ethnicity and class. In other words, rather than post-modernism regarding ethnicity and class objectively, *a priori*, statically, or academically, I would like to regard post-modernism as something fluid and variable, essentially as an asset of language and discourse. I would imagine that there are not many people attempting to explain this in such clear-cut terms, but I should be able to say that I understand post-modernism theoretically in this way.

I do not think that such emphasis itself is a mistake in principle. However, to bring it all down to earth, I do not think it is the case of people who make such emphasis attempting to push through their assertions with their own historical research. Speaking bluntly, I think it cannot be said that sufficient results have been achieved that will allow us to adequately grasp Korean history and its social structure, or to indicate a pathway to the future. To be even more frank, I think that this is a condition in which not even the modern-day project of building a unified Korean nation-state has been achieved, and there is a drawback in that problems related to ethnic groups and class are not being given sufficient consideration.

Despite this, micro-historical research is still necessary. It is only natural that, in order to make historical research an abundant field and to understand the past in a broader sense, we should utilize a variety of ideas and research methods. The problem is that dialog and interaction between macro-history and micro-history are not going well. I think both types of history are necessary. Normally, both are regarded as necessary, but the interrelationship between the two is not going well. We must consider if there are ways to make this interrelationship go well. To that end, we must consider research methodologies. I have recently come to feel strongly that what is important here is a "modernity" way of thinking, the way of thinking about things, the problem of "colonialism," and in relation to that, "post-colonialism."

It is not possible to consider history without including ethnicity and class. I think the same applies to Japan, although not everyone says so. When I bring up the issue of ethnicity and class in Japan, I often get a sardonic smile in return, but in Japan, the biggest ethnicity issue is the problem of the imperial system. The imperial system is an ethnic group problem. At the end of the Edo period, Japan (actually, at that time, the

term "Nippon" was not yet in common use), or the Japanese archipelago, was at risk of being colonized under the Western invasion. As the country tried to consider ways to escape colonialism, the country encountered the major problem of "Japanese nation." Eventually, Japan attempted to get past the risk of colonialism by introducing an imperial system based on absolute allegiance to the government. I strongly believe that Japan's current inability to fully overcome its past could be because of the existence of the imperial system problem as well as the problem of concepts related to the imperial system. As such, it could be said that Japan in its own right has the problem of ethnicity issue. There is also the problem of class. Why must white-collar workers leave their homes at 8:00 in the morning and work until 1:00 or 2:00 at night? Every month, dozens, or even hundreds of people are dying from overwork. This is indeed a problem of class. But in Japan, people are not trying to see this problem, realize the problem, or think about the problem. In Korea, the problem of class is more clearly defined than in Japan. Now there are those who say that the class problem is not as visible as it was in the past, but it is still very visible. Looking at newspapers, etc., we see that Korea is still having demonstrations and strikes almost daily. In addition to labor unrest, there are also farmers protesting the deregulation of agricultural products. Of course, there are also students who are demonstrating. Within these movements, we can consider that there is certainly anger with respect to class differences.

In Japan, the terms "Japanese nation" and "class" disappeared from common use long ago. The term "common people" is not used, and it seems that we are left with basically terms such as "national people" and "citizen." What is more, I also get the sense that "national people" and "citizen" represent opposing concepts. On that point, in Korea, terms such as "Korean nation," "national people," "common people," and "citizen" are still being used in juxtaposition, and are used to complement each other. In the 1970s, national culture was strongly advocated, and in the 1980s, the idea of "common people culture" flourished in relation to the fight for democracy. These ideas of Korean nation and common people were in no way opposing views. Rather, it is said that the term "common people" was needed to instill a more concrete understanding of, or provide more concrete explanation about what it was that Korean nation were fighting

against. The term “citizen” used in the 1990s was the same. In Korea today, points are often raised and discussed about the cooperation and tie-ups between common people movements and civic movements.

Furthermore, we have the case of north-south separation as an example of an actual problem. One never knows when war may break out again, and this sense of danger and uncertainty is deeply instilled in the hearts of the people. It is indeed an ethnic group problem. In that sense, ethnic group problems and class problems can be seen more easily in Korea than in Japan. It could be said that these problems are readily visible, and that more than a few people are attempting to tackle these problems. However, as for research methodologies, when it comes to questions such as what type of methods should be used, and how they should be positioned, I think that the current condition in Korea is unclear, with no good outlook. Micro-history is one attempt to break through this issue, but micro-history certainly cannot carry the burden of everything.

I would like to mention again about the introduction of Marxism in the 1980s and nationalism. Although Marxism does not offer a clear-cut thesis of the concept of nation, it is a fact that ethnic group problems are actively discussed in relation to Marxism. In Korea, such issues are discussed under the format of “common people identity.” Post-modern concepts came into play in this issue in the 1990s. With this as a background, nationalism came to be regarded as a subject of disapproval, and something requiring concern. This is one of the major characteristics in the way nationalism was introduced in Korea. As you all know, Im Chi-hyŏn and Kwŏn Hyŏk-pŏm are representative critics of nationalism, and Ko Mi-suk is a critic of dichotomy, as well as an active leader in feminism and gender theory.

One comes to realize many things when listening to these people speak. We can learn much from their discussions. Still, we cannot completely deny nationalism, and it is not acceptable to simply disregard all of the ideas of dichotomy, such as male versus female, self versus other, and internal versus external. Both nationalism and dichotomy must be considered, and we must create a basis for bringing these two concepts together in a complementary manner. I get the feeling that perhaps, in that sense, because the negative aspects of nationalism in Korea are too great at

the moment, these people are deliberately taking the role of criticizing nationalism at this time. Also, while the issues of gender and feminism have been discussed at length for some time now, this type of post-modern or 脱近代的 (in the sense reflected by the Chinese characters) concept was considerably influential from the latter half of the 1990s until about last year.

I think, however, that situation changed slightly starting with this year. As you know, a list of forty-two pro-Japanese literary writers was published in the autumn issue of *Shilch'ŏn Munhak* [Engagement Literature]. I believe it was in March that the Parliament met to discuss whether or not to form a committee within the Parliament that would pursue and eliminate pro-Japanese factions. We could understand this to be a movement calling for the re-establishment of a special anti-Korean nation committee that was crushed by Yi Sŭng-man in 1948. In the historical science world as well, there has been a much stronger demand this year to seek out and eliminate pro-Japanese factions. Theoretical rebuttals have also been made against Im Chi-hyŏn and others who have criticized nationalism. For example, Kim Chin-sŏk, managing editor of *Sahoe Pip'yŏng* [Social Critiques] has recently been criticizing the nationalism criticisms of Im Chi-hyŏn, and has been stating that the practical fascism of Kim's contemporary Mun Pu-shik, as well as internal fascism may be religious fundamentalism or a type of utopian ideology. What is more, the people saying such things themselves had a hand in the statism or authoritarianism that followed after the liberation of Korea, and had an extremely pro-Japanese relationship with the *Chosŏn Ilbo*, which supported Pak Chŏng-hŭi style fascism, and yet they still make head on criticisms of fascism. I do not know if this is a double standard or dualism, but it is a standpoint that cannot be trusted.

Looking at these conditions, I get the feeling that theory is something that is truly difficult. I also occasionally speak about the importance of research methodology, but it is something that is actually rather difficult.

In that sense, I think it is important to again carefully examine the details of modern/ modernity, colonial modern/colonial modernity/coloniality as issues rose by modern and post-modern concepts, and to consider how



to apply these to the research of colonial Korea's government and economics as well as to the culture, education, concepts, etc. In this case, of course, modernity is a multi-layered compound subject formed within a concrete relationship of history, but also something, which we can only take as positive, and, which in it has the capacity for self liberation. In various specific places in history, modernity has also simultaneously had the capacities of domination and oppression, and in that sense, it is vital that we understand modern and modernity in a dualistic or even multi-layered, compound since.

Furthermore, if we establish the idea of "colony modern" and recognize Western modern and colony modern as mutually complementary and mutually penetrative, and recognize the conflict between modern and colonial modern, then it becomes possible to recognize the "universality" within colonial modern, recognizing this universality in the Western sense. To put this another way, looking at this from the standpoint of colonialism being an essential element of Western modern, and from a meaning that includes non-Western, we can establish the issue of post-modern being equivalent to post-colonialism, and through this, the historical research of non-Western areas such as colonial Korea can develop in a more abundant direction.

I feel as if I have said something that is very difficult, something which not even I can understand, but this is actually exactly what I am working very hard to summarize. My work has not been completed, but I hope to soon be able to summarize this in a finished paper, albeit a short one. During the past fiscal year, while staying in London and Seoul, I thought a lot about the meanings of modernity and colony-ness, as used in magazines, etc., and I felt as if I would like to intertwine the problems of post-modern and decolonization, in my own way, into one logic, and I would like to secure a research methodology.

One thing that was always on my mind while I was living in London and Seoul was how the terms "modern," "post-modern," and "decolonization" as used in Japan differ from the terms used in Korea, based on the meaning of the Chinese characters. So, I decided to examine what type of content there was that gives meaning to these terms. If possible, I would like to push the Korean modern concept and the Japan modern concept together and to study aspects such as the mutual



complementary relationship of the two, as well as the mutual penetration, crossover and duality of the two. For Japan and Korea, I would like to study the discontinuity and deviations of the concepts, and also the commonality and mixture of the concepts. However, such methodology would be difficult. This is perhaps not simply a problem of historical science or the history of thought, but a problem related to various fields, and I indeed feel that I need to organize a bit more my ideas on what the meanings are of the terms of "modernity," "coloniality" as well as "de-colonize"/"de-colonization." In Seoul, I often attended some study meetings on colony modern and study meetings on the research of historical problems. At these meetings, I would present a paper about my concepts and would be critiqued. After returning to Japan, I made corrections to the paper numerous times, and then I presented my opinions twice at separate study meetings and was again critiqued.

As for the idea of what "modernity" is, discussions on this matter are very active. So many discussions are taking place, to the point that I actually feel I do not have the capacity to discuss the matter myself. Around the world, several hundred, or even several thousand books have been published, and it is not possible for me to tackle this subject full on. Thus, I must completely rid my mind of these ideas, and organize my ideas about how I should go about understanding things and thinking about things in my own way.

As I mentioned a little while ago, I think that "modernity" is a multi-layered, compound concept formed within a concrete historical relationship. In this case, I would for now like to regard modernity as a positive concept with the capacity for self liberation. In the reality of history, however, it is also certain that modernity has functioned simultaneously in the capacities of domination and oppression as well. Actually, the various systems, standardized languages, schools, newspaper media, etc., established in conjunction with the formation of modern nation-states could all be said to function as a mechanism that simultaneously indicates aspects of the self liberation of modernity as well as the aspects of domination and oppression. This is something that we must indeed recognize. As for military force, whether this is an example of modernity, or something that simply slaughters people, is a matter for

another discussion. However, if we consider the formation of modern nation-states as having positive aspects, then we must also evaluate the military and military systems, which served a major role in the formation of these nation-states, as having some positive aspects. If we do not look at modernity as having some positive aspects, we will not be able to talk about the modern age itself. Of course, looking at something as having some positive aspects also means that it has negative aspects as well. Looking at modernity within the concrete reality of history, we see that while having positive aspects, modernity has also functioned simultaneously in dominating, negative, and oppressive capacities. This is a fact that we must indeed come to understand. And this applies to everyone and everything, including schools and newspapers.

In that sense, it is necessary to understand modern and modernity as something that is dualistic or multi-layered and complex. In Korea, there are people emphasizing “post-modern,” for example, a group that is active in civil activities is the “Yŏn’gu kong’gan—Nŏmŏ” (Research Space: Going Beyond), and one of its members is Yi Chin-kyŏng. I think that these people are very strongly emphasizing the standpoint of seeing “modern” as being multi-layered. I have conducted various types of lectures with citizenry participation, and these programs are truly diverse. I get the feeling that they cover everything, including of course philosophy, social science, and humanities, as well as things like literature, music, cinema, and representational theory.

Naturally, what is important here is the necessity of considering “colonial modern” and not just simply “modern.” This is of course true for Korea, and Japan must also embrace this concept. I think in Europe as well, discussions will not go well if this concept is omitted. “Modern” in itself and colonialism are two sides of the same coin, expressed in various ways depending on whether it is mentioned from the side of invasion and colonial rule by Western forces, or from the side of the non-Western regions that were invaded and colonized. Basically, “modern” is not limited to just “Western modern.” There is a modern age in Asia as well, and this also has a close relationship to the Western modern age, and also to “universality.” In the case of Korea in particular, the country was completely colonized, and even now has characteristics of a new American

colony, but we can no longer just consider this in terms of modern and modernity, we must inevitably also consider colony modern and coloniality.

Thinking in this way, while there are various formats of modernity, in the case of Japan, the country has attributes of modernity coerced by Western forces. Furthermore, in regard to the country taking on the format of an Imperial Japan, we can consider the introduction of the Imperial system to have a positive meaning with respect to the formation of modernity. Actually, the Imperial system played a central role in the formation of Japanese nationalism, and through this, exhibited more than a little influence in Japan's independence from foreign powers, and in the country's domestic modernization. However, at the same time, the Imperial system also had negative aspects that could be considered feudalistic. Such aspects can be seen in Yoshida Shōin's requirement of the emperor's absolute allegiance to the government, in the assertions of the theory of an entire nation (subjects) under a single sovereign ruler, in the Dai Nippon Imperial Constitution, and in the Imperial Prescript on Education. Asian incursion is also inextricably linked to this. In that sense, even if we consider the Imperial system separately as a government mechanism and as an ideology, we must still say that both had a meaning of opposition to the universality intended by Western modernization. Of course, this may lead to the question of whether Western modernization is really such a good thing, but apart from that, I think we must still consider this in multi-layered, compound aspects, as I mentioned earlier.

Putting Japan aside for the moment and focusing on Korea, if we state that it is necessary to consider aspects such as "colonial modern," "colonial modernity," and "Korean modernity," then I think that for Korea, the thing that is most distinctive among the discussions currently being conducted in relation to modern and post-modern is perhaps the fact that there is an era of "colonial modern." In Japan, when subjects such as the end of the Edo period and the modern age are discussed, the discussions include basically no aspect of a time of colonial modern. A big question for me is whether or not this is really OK, but regardless, it is correct to say that in discussions in Korea, the colonial modern era has already been established as an issue. Now although colonial modernity includes concepts that have not been

discussed much in Japan, I think that the concept of colonial modernity is also rather important when discussing about Japan. When considering questions such as why intellectuals in modern Japan tend to take a sense of victimization, or why even today Japan has not been able to skillfully resolve or overcome its past, I feel that if we were to include the concept of colonial modernity in our thinking, it would become surprisingly easy to understand these matters.

The term “coloniality” is of course a term corresponding to “modernity,” and the two indicate opposite meanings. So, if we take modernity as having the capacity for self liberation, then we may be able to consider coloniality as having the capacity for self oppression. We can consider modernity and coloniality as opposing matters. I have recently come to think that this may be extremely important. This is purely and simply a problem of allocation, a problem of relationship. For example, Korean Japanese experience a great deal of stress and suffering from the fact that they are Korean Japanese. We experience stress about our own origins, even though it is something completely out of our control. However, one day when the Korean Japanese somehow come to understand, accept, and get past the issues of their own existence, then the feeling of their existence will come to have positive meaning. At that time, a person may think, “So, I am a Korean Japanese. This may have had a negative meaning within the history of Japan, but that is not my fault at all. My existence is not something that I have determined; it is an historical and social matter. Actually, I am in an important position for reforming society.”

From yesterday to today, the same person has come to think in completely different terms. As such, the things this person does will also change completely. The fact that this changes completely one day indicates that it is a problem of allocation, a problem of relationship. In this sense, historical science would regard such a problem as central, semi-peripheral, or peripheral. As expected, we can understand this as a problem of modernity or a problem of coloniality. I think it may also be necessary to consider this as a problem of allocation.

If we broaden our thinking, we can see that the “modern person” may be something structured by the various “allocations” of modernity and coloniality. This concept of “allocation” is used by such people as Deleuze,

a heavyweight in the realm of French contemporary ideology, but here, of course, what is important is the stance of considering things within the "relationship" of such factors as history and fact. Of course, due to disparity or difference, even with the same element of modernity, people come to bear differing personalities under different allocations. In that sense, coloniality is not only something of slaughter and oppression due to invasions and battles, it is also something of diverse and complex discrimination formed under various formats in the respective structures that are central, semi-peripheral, and peripheral, and it is something generated from ideas such as oppression, disdain, and fiction.

Well, let us say that we can expect that there is no perfect modernity, nor is there fixed and invariable colony-ness. The "allocation" of modernity and colony-ness varies depending on the changes in the conditions of whether one is invading or being invaded, oppressing or being oppressed, discriminating or being discriminated against. In particular this allocation varies according to battles fought at specific places in history. In other words, I might dare to say that modernity in a positive sense is something that can be acquired by fighting. Actually, although this does not have the same meaning as the Marxist historical view of development, the history of humankind is one in which great advancements have been made through the process of warfare.

If we think in this way, then we can eventually recognize that "colonial modernity" does indeed form a portion of modernity in as much as there is a mutual penetration of modernity and coloniality. Modernity obtained under colonialism is, of course, an extremely delicate and complex matter, and in particular, we could say that modernity is something that is conceptualized in the form of a comparison with Western modernity under the specific condition of colonial rule. In that sense, colonial modern itself has taken on a sense of duality from the start within the specific conditions of history. Now this may be an over typification, but one aspect of this duality is "modernity without identity structure process" that disregards the significance of history-centric formation by accepting colonization. The other aspect of this duality is "modernity moving through the identity structure process," which comes from a negative aspect and occurs in conjunction with opposition to colonization. In other words, this

is a problem of figuring out where to find one's own direction as an historical identity within the condition of experiencing continuing distortions in the momentum that forms identity as a result of invading forces and colonial authority. Looking at specific historical facts, and realizing of course that extreme simplification may result in some misunderstanding, in terms of literature in modern Korea, Yi Kwang-su coincides with the first aspect of the duality I described; his internal psyche may have been violated by colony-ness, leading him to be accused as pro-Japanese. Conversely, Yun Tong-ju, who is also well known in Japan as an anti-Japanese poet, could be said to belong to the second aspect of the duality.

Speaking in this way, we come to understand that the problem of the disbandment and condemnation of pro-Japanese movements in Korea, a major problem in Korea today, is a problem related to modernity, colonialism, and colonial modernity. This is, of course, also an argument that involves post-colonialism.

"Decolonization" is an even more difficult subject that I am not sure I really fully understand. The term itself is not that difficult, and we can understand it for what it is, but I think this term also has extremely deep meaning (that goes beyond the superficial meaning of the term). This is not something that everyone will come to understand if I just talk about it for five or ten minutes, and there is doubt about whether even I fully understand the subject. Also, the ways of speaking and thinking about the term can differ greatly depending on the person, as I discussed earlier in regard to the terms "modern" and "post-modern."

I do not really understand well what post-modern is. As there are issues that cannot be resolved within the aspects of "modern," must we also consider "post-modern?" Once we get past "modern," is what we have "post-modern?" Although this is something that is not understood well, there are in fact arguments that assert this "post-modern." As for me, I think that the essence of "post-modern" may be "decolonization." Efforts to overcome colonialism, a characteristic of the modern era, may be indeed efforts out of necessity to break loose from and overcome the modern times.

What is important here is that decolonization is not just a non-western

issue correlating to colonialism. It is also an issue for the European and American countries where colonialism was implemented, as well as an issue for imperialistic countries such as Japan. I think it is necessary to distinguish the English term "decolonization" from the corresponding terms used in the Japanese and Korean languages. That is, the viewpoint of the West and the idea of colonialism are definitely important. However, for non-Western regions, including North and South Korea and Japan, as well as other areas of Asia and Africa, I think it is necessary to have a framework of knowledge that differs from the ideas of Europe and America.

I would like to refer to this as decolonization in the sense inferred by the Chinese characters. The reason for my using the term "post-modern" (脱近代) as well as "decolonization" (脱植民地主義) is so that myself and others can be thinking on the same page in order to mutually overcome modern colonialism.

This is an issue for Western countries that implemented colonialism, and it also applies to non-Western countries who suffered damage under colonialism. Of course, the content differs depending on whether we are looking at a Western or non-Western country. In that sense, if you put this extremely simply, post-colonialism is something of regret for the perpetrator, and something of opposition for the victim. For a country such as Korea, where the country has achieved a level of economic growth and has advanced into the world market, the situation becomes more complex, but basically, I think that the idea I have expressed here is rather appropriate. In the case of Japan, this is a matter of burying the past. This is post-imperialism, but based on the past; this must certainly be "post-emperor-system" or "post-emperor-ism." In principle, this could be nothing else. Of course, if we press the point even further, we could say that the fact that post-modern equals post-colonialism is related to battles with capitalism itself, or to the issue of anti-system movements.

The subjects for today were "Korea under Japanese rule" and "the status and issues of research," but I think my talk has gone off in an unnecessary direction, leaving you with the feeling that you might not be sure exactly what it is I have wanted to say. However, what I hope to point out is that we cannot continue to study the history of colonial ages, or the history of thought, using only conventional methods, or using primarily



historical research. To that end, there has been a hard-fought battle to find a good method, and I would like to consider that perhaps what I have mentioned here is a good method. There are various issues to be considered—the issues of Japan and Korea, North-South separation, Japan unrepentant about its past, the problem of colonial rule and subjugation around the world, efforts to overcome modern times, the rapid flow of globalism, the issues of dominion and identity, and battles to ensure individual dignity. What I have tried to examine here today was to look at what the viewing angles, methodologies, and realistic policies are that will allow us to examine all of these issues in a unified, consistent manner. Academically, this is an extremely important issue, but perhaps what will be discussed here starting today will be based on an awareness of these issues.



## Summary

### Modernity/Post-modernity and Post-colonialism: On the Tasks and Methodology of Historical Research

Historical research maintains an important position in the study of the liberal arts and social sciences. It is related with the fact that certain aspects of historical awareness have become a core element in people's lives.

Historians are agreed that Chosŏn (i.e. Korea) and Japan shared a period, which is generally referred to as the "early modern period" (*kūndae*), although it was a bitter experience for both. In other words, the early modern and modern history of Korea and Japan were two sides of the same coin, and so, accordingly, the study of Chosŏn under Japanese colonial rule could have considerable significance in the lives of the people of present-day South and North Korea as well as Japan. Historical research into Chosŏn under colonial rule has been extensively conducted in Japan and the two Koreas, leading to particularly notable achievements by historians in South Korea in the 1980s and 1990s, and transforming political, economic and cultural methodologies into an interlocking form incorporating the progress currently being made in historical research around the world.

The modern history of Chosŏn is defined largely by the period of colonial rule under the Japanese imperialists and the South-North division following Liberation in 1945. Meanwhile, Japan's modern history had been characterized, in a rather consistent manner, by the emperor system as a political framework, exercising a considerable influence on the historical perception of the Japanese colonial rule and the issue of the settlement of the past.

I would like to briefly discuss in the keynote report of this essay some issues related with the tasks and methodology of the historical researches conducted in Korea. In the discussion I will not limit the research methodology to which Korean historians have exploited in the post-war period, but will rather expand it to new methods, which were extensively talked about among Korean historians in the 1990s, such as those that often involve the use of such terms as post-modernism/post-modernity, post-

colonialism, modernity, and colonialism.

Historians in colonial Chosŏn were dominated by a colonial historiography that emphasized colonial stagnation and the heteronomy imposed by the imperial power, and bibliographical study. It is widely known, however, that there was a group of Korean historians in the colonial period that raised the question of the germination of capitalism as a methodology of socio-economic history. The end of the Pacific War in 1945 led Korean historians to conduct studies aimed at overcoming the colonial historiography by shedding new light on the injustices caused and the atrocities committed by the Japanese colonialists, forming eventually a theory intended to discover the germ of capitalism within Korean society in the later Chosŏn period. What they valued were the questions of the national and the social hierarchy whose theoretic development later contributed to the growth of the pro-democracy movement in the 1980s, which was greatly indebted to the development of the Marxism-based "populist historiography" (*minjung sagwan*) that emphasizes the role of the people in the proletarian revolution. The movement became overwhelmed, however, by Korea's outstanding economic growth during the late 1980s, which facilitated the emergence of the "colonial modernization" theory. Since then, scholars have aired contrasting views on the socio-economic changes that occurred during the colonial period, stirring up disputes over whether the changes resulted from either the development or exploitation policies of the colonial government.

The philosophical tendency of Korean arts and literature in the 1990s was characterized by the explosive popularity of various 'post-isms' including post-modernism. The focus of philosophical and literary discussions in Korea moved from Marx to modern French thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and from the use of such terms as capitalism, state, nation and social class to postmodern ideas focused on body, desire, culture, knowledge and power. It was a period in which words such as capitalism, state, nation and social class were considered as anti-democratic, repressive words, having a strong influence upon the humanities and social sciences including literature, the arts and, finally, the field of history.

As is evident in the feature articles contained in *Yŏksa pip'yŏng* [Historical Critiques] and the publication of such books as *P'osŭt'ŭmodŏnjŭmgwa*

*yŏksahak* [Post-modernism and History], Korean history circles are still greatly interested in trans-nationalism and post-nationalism as concepts closely related with the tasks and methodology of historical research. One great example may be found in the popularity of nationalist criticism, which they believe will bring about the rejection of traditional concepts and introduce new ideas, although no one is certain, yet whether it will lead us to a correct analysis of the history and social structure of both South and North Korea or set us on the right path to reunification and the post-division era.

The introduction of such concepts as post-modernism/post-modernity and post-colonialism to Korean history circles raised the question of what is modernism or modernity, leading them to profound discussions about the concepts of "colonial modernism" and "colonialism" and finally of "post-colonialism" or "post-modernity." The current debates about modernity/post-modernity are largely focused on the criticism of nationalism by various disciplines including feminism, but they converge with basic questions such as how we can understand "micro-history" as a concept to replace "macro-history" and whether we need to deny the traditional dichotomies of imperialism/nationalism, interior/exterior, reason/emotion, self/other and male/female.

No one can easily conclude that all historians working from the trans-nationalist or post-nationalist viewpoints are supporters of post-colonialism/post-modernism, but it is certain that their views are greatly influenced by post-modern ideas developed in modern France. They do not agree with the view that post-modernism lacks the prospects and strategy for nationalist issues and those of social hierarchy, and insist that it is basically a product of language and discourse and hence always mobile and changeable. This assertion may not be wrong in essence, but the truth is that little of their history researches have led to any significant achievement that might help us to acquire the right perception of Korean history and the structure of Korean society or guide us along the right path to the future. Their weakness, one might argue, arises from their not having given sufficient consideration to the question connected with the Korean people in both the South and North and their social classes, for whom the construction of a reunified nation state still remains the most important modern project to be achieved.

Considering the situation, it is important to review the concepts raised via post-modernist ideas, such as “modernism,” “modernity,” “colonial modernism” and “colonialism,” and think over how we can exploit them for the study of the politics, economy, culture and education of Chosŏn under the colonial rule. One may conclude, then, that modernity is something complex and multi-layered which has its form in its specific relationship with history. It is, in short, something positive, a power that liberates itself. History shows that modernity operates as a power for control and suppression, and it is in this context that we can accept the dualism of modernism and modernity and, going one step further, the conflict between modernism and colonial modernism. It will help us then to accept the word “universality” in the Western sense of the word, namely as something that existed in the colonial modernity. Considering that the modernity of the West was in essence founded on the basis of colonialism, the viewpoint derived from linking post-modernity with post-colonialism will help history research on non-Western countries, including Chosŏn under the colonial rule, to obtain more fruitful results.